DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 373 656 HE 027 642

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TITLE Reengineering the Community College: Data Support for a Two Tier Institution. AIR 1994 Annual Forum Paper.
PUB DATE Jun 94
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research (34th, New Orleans, LA, May 29-June 1, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Planning; Community Colleges; *Data Collection; Educational Change; Higher Education; Information Utilization; *Institutional Research; Institutional Role; Public Colleges; *Strategic Planning
IDENTIFIERS *AIR Forum; *Utah Valley State College

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role that the Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Planning played in providing data support, planning, and cohesiveness as Utah Valley Community College worked to become Utah Valley State College. The two tier model adopted at Utah Valley State College aspires to describe a cost-effective four-year college with a strong upper division based upon a healthy vigorous comprehensive community college lower division. More than 10,000 individuals, representing current, former, and future students and community members, were surveyed concerning their support of 4-year programs at the community college. Surveys used questions written to exclude any bias, and sound sampling techniques were incorporated. Results of the research on community support and interest were cited continually throughout the debate, appeal, and negotiations for 4-year status. All candidate degree programs were subjected to in-depth analysis based upon student demand, market demand, placement history, and faculty credentials. A survey of over 12,000 workers employed in 10 Utah County companies was conducted to determine degree level and emphasis. Market and trend analysis techniques as well as integration of statewide and national placement data were also used. (JDD)

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REENGINEERING THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: DATA SUPPORT FOR A TWO TIER INSTITUTION

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MAY 29-JUNE 1

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This paper was presented at the Thirty-Fourth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at The New Orleans Marriott, New Orleans, Louisiana, May 29, 1994 - June 1, 1994. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

Jean Endo
Editor
Forum Publications

INTRODUCTION

On August 1, 1993, Utah Valley Community College became Utah Valley State College. This change represented a new direction in higher education--a two tier institution, maintaining a strong committment to the community college mission and open access, with the added dimension of selected 4-year degree programs. The road to "statehood" for Utah Valley State College was long, political and extremely data intensive.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the strong role the college Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Planning played in providing data support, planning and cohesiveness to the quest for 4-year status.

THE INSTITUTION

Utah Valley State College was established over fifty years ago (1941) to meet the training needs of the people and the industry of Central Utah.

Fifty years of history has brought great change to the Mountainlands Region of Central Utah. Population has exploded, industrial development has leaped into the high technology of the information age with WordPerfect, Novell and other computing giants calling the Provo/Orem area home. Utah Valley State College, responding to its mission and reflecting its "community," has also grown, changed, and matured. Fall enrollment for 1993 exceeded 10,500 students in degree seeking programs. Preserving its strong technical and vocational heritage, the College has endeavored to maintain an appropriate balance between career and college parallel programs. The 4-year model grew from "community" need for expanded educational resources. Utah Valley State College was challenged to provide new programs and services and to do so without abandoning its ongoing role and mission.

HIGHER EDUCATION'S BLURRING ROLES

The Institution's desire to add 4-year degree programs was not without controversy. Is it possible for a community college to expand into upper division work and still preserve the community college mission for its lower division? This question was central to a debate being raised across the United States and pivotal to the discussions within the state of Utah. History is of little assistance in this question, since those colleges which have expanded from two-year to four-year in the past have typically not set preserving the lower division as a community college as a cornerstone of their conversion effort. The fact is, the traditional roles of differing types of higher education institutions have been blurring for the last decade or more.

Interestingly, this blurring is not restricted to an upward "academic creep," as some have characterized it Throughout the United States, universities are operating as traditional state colleges, teacher colleges, and technical colleges; state colleges, teacher college and technical colleges are operating as traditional universities; and all seem to be embracing areas historically reserved, or relegated, to the community college. Responding to pressures from a variety of constituencies, universities and colleges have shifted their focus away from the more traditional, classical, liberal arts orientation to a more practical, job-oriented approach. Universities, once the bastion of liberal arts and graduate professional studies, have come to look like comprehensive community colleges in many ways.

This blurring of roles is not a negative change for higher education. Rather, it is a response to student demand, to community and state demand, and to funding initiatives. As America's economy has been increasingly impacted be the global marketplace, and as

competition for entering this marketplace has become more and more challenging, student pressure for "job-oriented" or "relevant" education has intensified.

Higher education is changing, responding to the needs and demands of students, industries, and communities. New types of institutions will likely emerge from this period of challenge and change. The two tier-model adopted at Utah Valley State College nine months ago aspires to be representative of a cost-effective four-year college with a strong upper division based upon a healthy vigorous comprehensive community college lower division.

PRESERVING THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSION

As this new model has been developed and will continue to develop over the next few years, careful attention must be given to preserving the community college mission and role for the lower division. Some characteristics which are essential to this role include: open door access, developmental programs, outcomes assessment, associate of Applied Science Degrees, Associate of Arts and Associate of Science Degrees, Certificates and Diplomas, Mountainlands Applied Technology Center, strong relationships with business, industry and the community at large.

THE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH FUNCTION

The model development was dependent upon extensive research and data collection by the campus Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Planning.

The Institutional Research Office at Utah Valley State College is critically located and enjoys strong administrative and campus support with the Director reporting to the President and functioning as an integral member of the President's cabinet.

Understandably, UVSC's desire for 4-year programs was not without controversy and strong opposition existed from other state funded institutions. Much of the controversy centered around the question of "need" and "access."

The overriding challenge for the UVSC Institutional Research office was to focus on the "need" issue while maintaining data integrity.

THE DATA ELEMENTS

A variety of data collection techniques were imposed to determine community and student interest and support for potential 4-year degree programs. Some of the studies were sophisticated and detailed, while others were relatively simple measures of potential interest.

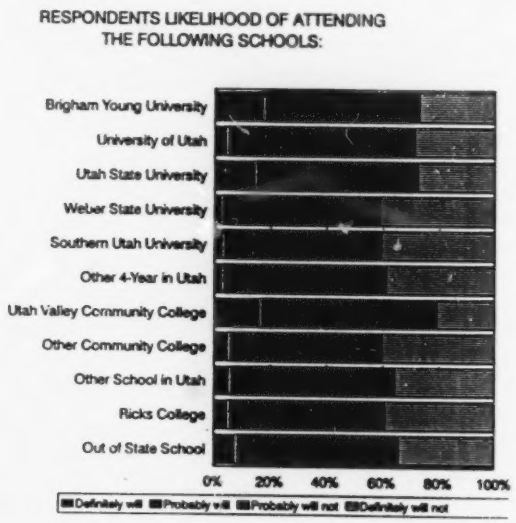
Until Regent approval to formally study 4-year programs, much of the data collection was supplemental to other research. Subsequent research centered around the following questions:

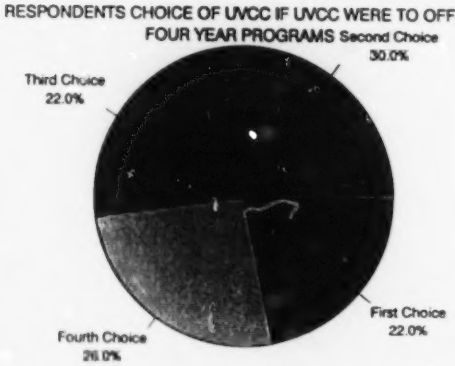
1. Are you supportive of UVCC offering 4-year programs?
2. If UVCC were to offer 4-year programs, would you apply?
3. What is your intended major?

More than 10,000 individuals, representing current, former, and future students and community members were surveyed. Considerable care and caution were employed in the data gathering and analysis methodology and several independent and research firms were used to assist in the data collection. The questions asked of the respondents were written in an attempt to exclude any bias, and every effort was made to incorporate sound sampling techniques. A description of the survey instruments and a sample of some of the results is offered below.

HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY

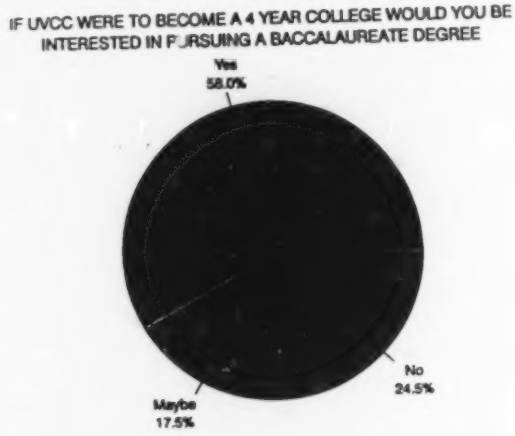
During the Fall of 1990, an extensive survey of 2,184 utah county high school seniors was conducted to determine student plans after high school graduation. More than 62 percent of those surveyed indicated that "living at home" was important to them when deciding which institution to attend. While more than 40 percent of the high school seniors surveyed indicated they wished to attend Brigham Young University, 61 percent chose UVCC as their 1st or 2nd choice institution. When the additional option of UVCC becoming a 4-year school was introduced, 52 percent stated it was their 1st or 2nd choice.




RESPONDENTS CHOICE OF UVCC IF UVCC WERE TO OFFER FOUR YEAR PROGRAMS
Second Choice 30.0%
Third Choice 22.0%
First Choice 22.0%
Fourth Choice 26.0%

NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY

During Winter term 1991, a Non-returning Student Survey was conducted. While many of the non-returning students had transferred or found employment, 58 percent of the 200 respondents indicated that they would be interested in pursuing a baccalaureate degree at UVCC if such an option were available to them. An additional 17.5 percent indicated they "maybe" interested.

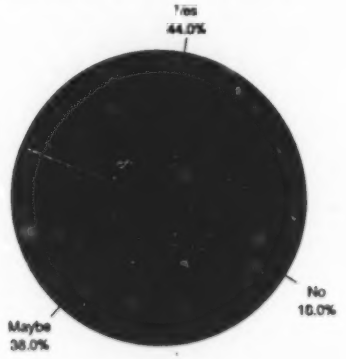


ENTERING AND CONTINUING STUDENT SURVEY

During the fall of 1990, entering and continuing students were surveyed regarding their interest in 4-year degrees at Utah Valley Community College. The Entering Student Survey results show that 44 percent of the respondents indicated "Yes" they would be interested in pursuing a baccalaureate degree at UVCC, with another 38 percent responding, "Maybe". The Continuing Student Survey is similar, but the percentage indicating they would be interested in pursuing a baccalaureate degree at UVCC is two points higher, at 46 percent.

IF UVCC WERE TO BECOME A 4 YEAR COLLEGE WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PURSUING A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE

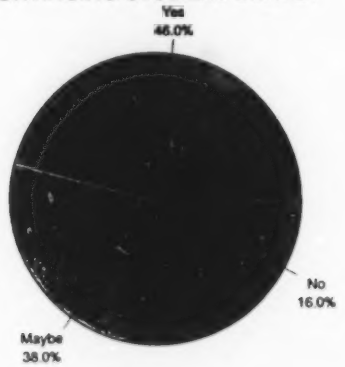
ENTERING STUDENT SURVEY



FALL 1990

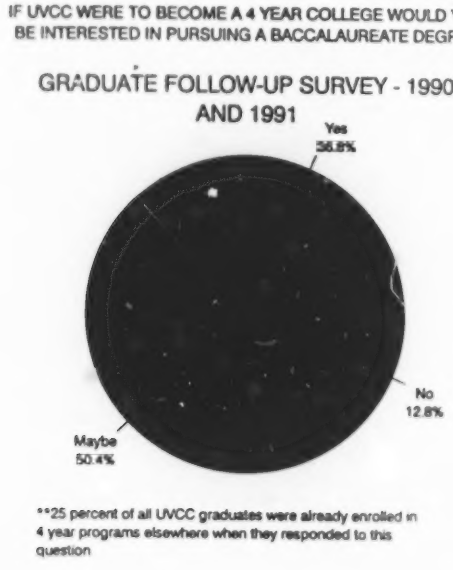
IF UVCC WERE TO BECOME A 4 YEAR COLLEGE WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PURSUING A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE

CONTINUING STUDENT SURVEY



GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

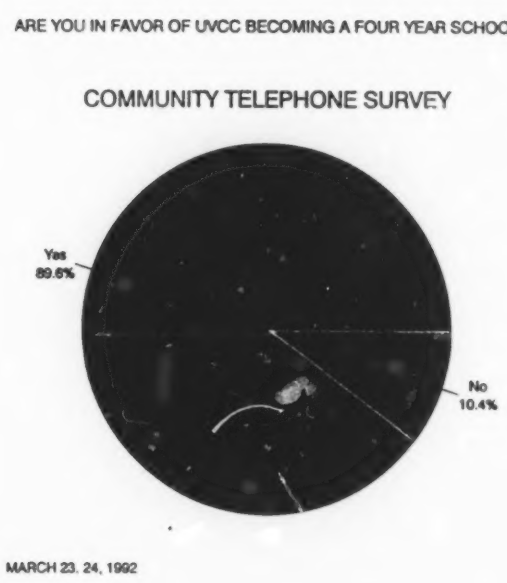
At the completion of each academic year, UVCC graduates are contacted by an independent research firm and asked to respond to an extensive questionnaire about their experiences at the College and theier current employment and educational involvement. Both the 1990 and 1991 graduates were also surveyed about their interest in pursuing a baccalaureate degree at UVCC. In interpreting the responses to this question, it should be noted that more than 25 percent of all graduates were already enrolled in 4-year programs at other institutions when they responded. Given this variable, of 865 graduates who were surveyed, 37 percent indicated, "Yes" and 50 percent indicated "Maybe" when asked if they would be interested in pursuing a baccalaureate degree at UVCC.

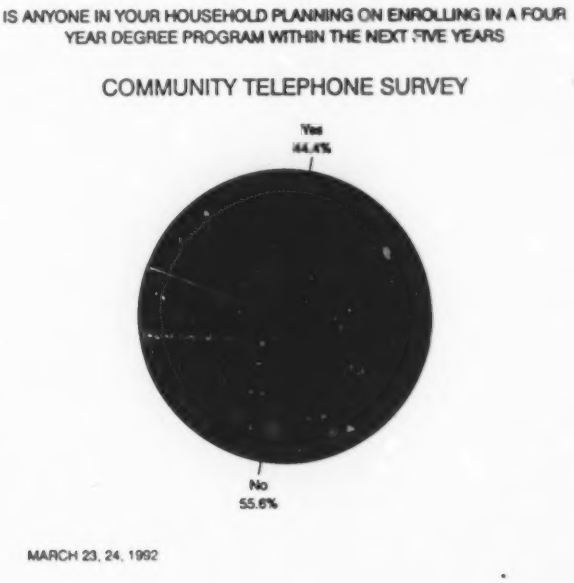

IF UVCC WERE TO BECOME A 4 YEAR COLLEGE WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PURSUING A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE
GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP SURVEY - 1990 AND 1991
Yes 36.8%
No 12.8%
Maybe 50.4%
**25 percent of all UVCC graduates were already enrolled in 4 year programs elsewhere when they responded to this question

Following the Regents initiative to actively study 4-year options at UVCC, with a very short time frame, three surveys were quickly conducted to determine community and student interest in 4-year programs at UVCC and specific areas of study.

COMMUNITY TELEPHONE SURVEY

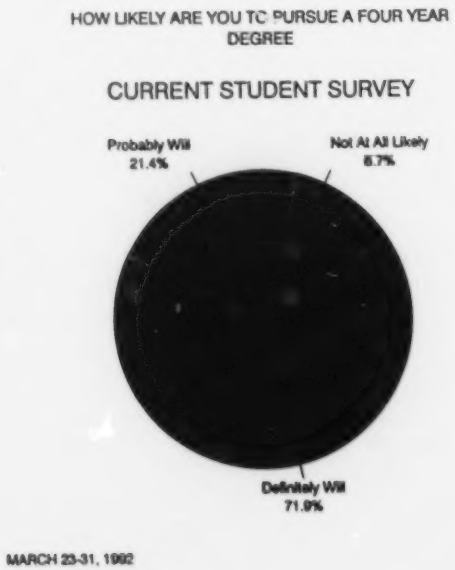
A community telephone survey was conducted by an outside research firm on March 23-24, 1992. The sample consisted of 2,000 Utah County households. The results showed that 89.6 percent of all respondents were interested in UVCC becoming a 4-year school. A further finding of this study was that 44 percent of all households projected that someone in their family would be enrolling at UVCC within the next 5 years. If UVCC offered 4-year degree programs that percentage would change to 59.4.

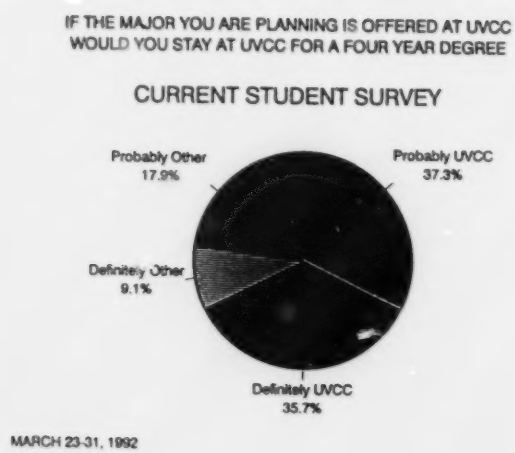



IS ANYONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD PLANNING ON ENROLLING IN A FOUR YEAR DEGREE PROGRAM WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS
COMMUNITY TELEPHONE SURVEY
Yes
44.4%
No
55.6%
MARCH 23, 24, 1992

CURRENT STUDENT SURVEY

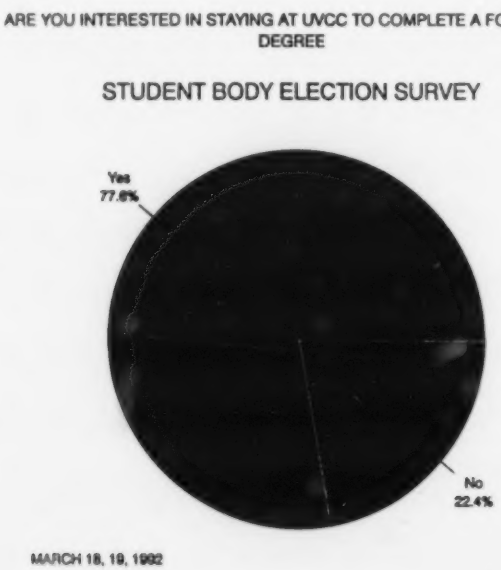
A survey of 2,000 currently registered students was conducted on March 23-25, 1992, the results show that 72.28 percent were "likely to pursue a 4-year degree" and more than 76 percent would definitely or probably pursue that degree at UVCC if it were available.





STUDENT BODY ELECTION SURVEY

During the Student Body elections on March 18 and 19, 1992, a survey question was added to the election ballot and 1,056 students responded. The results of the survey showed that 77.6 percent of all respondents were interested in staying at UVCC to complete a 4-year degree.

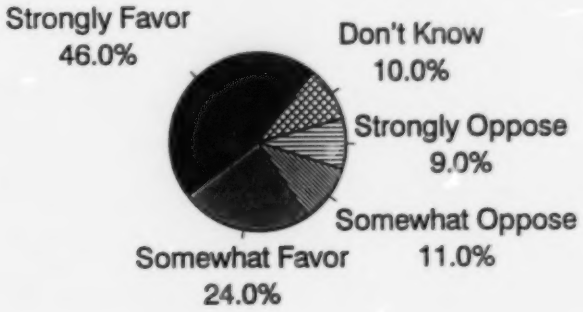


VOTERS SURVEY

In August of 1990, the independent marketing research firm of Dan Jones and Associates conducted a survey of 505 registered voters residing in Utah County. Seventy percent of all respondents were in favor of UVCC becoming a 4-year institution.

WOULD YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE UVCC BECOMING A 4 YEAR INSTITUTION

DAN JONES SURVEY



August 1990

CONCLUSION

The results of the research on community support and interest were cited continually throughtout the debate, appeal, and negotiations for 4-year status.

Another intensive area of research centered on degree program selection. All candidate programs for 4-year degrees were subjected to in-depth analysis based upon student demand, market demand, placement history and faculty credentials. In addition, a survey of over 12,000 workers, employed in 10 Utah County companies was conducted to determine degree level and emphasis.

Market and trend analysis techniques as well as integration of state-wide and national placement data were also used.

A politically astute President with a keen understanding of higher education and a strong data support for community need for 4-year programs were at the core of the two-tier model adopted in August of 1993.